KINOKAZE

REPORT FROM THE UNDERGROUND

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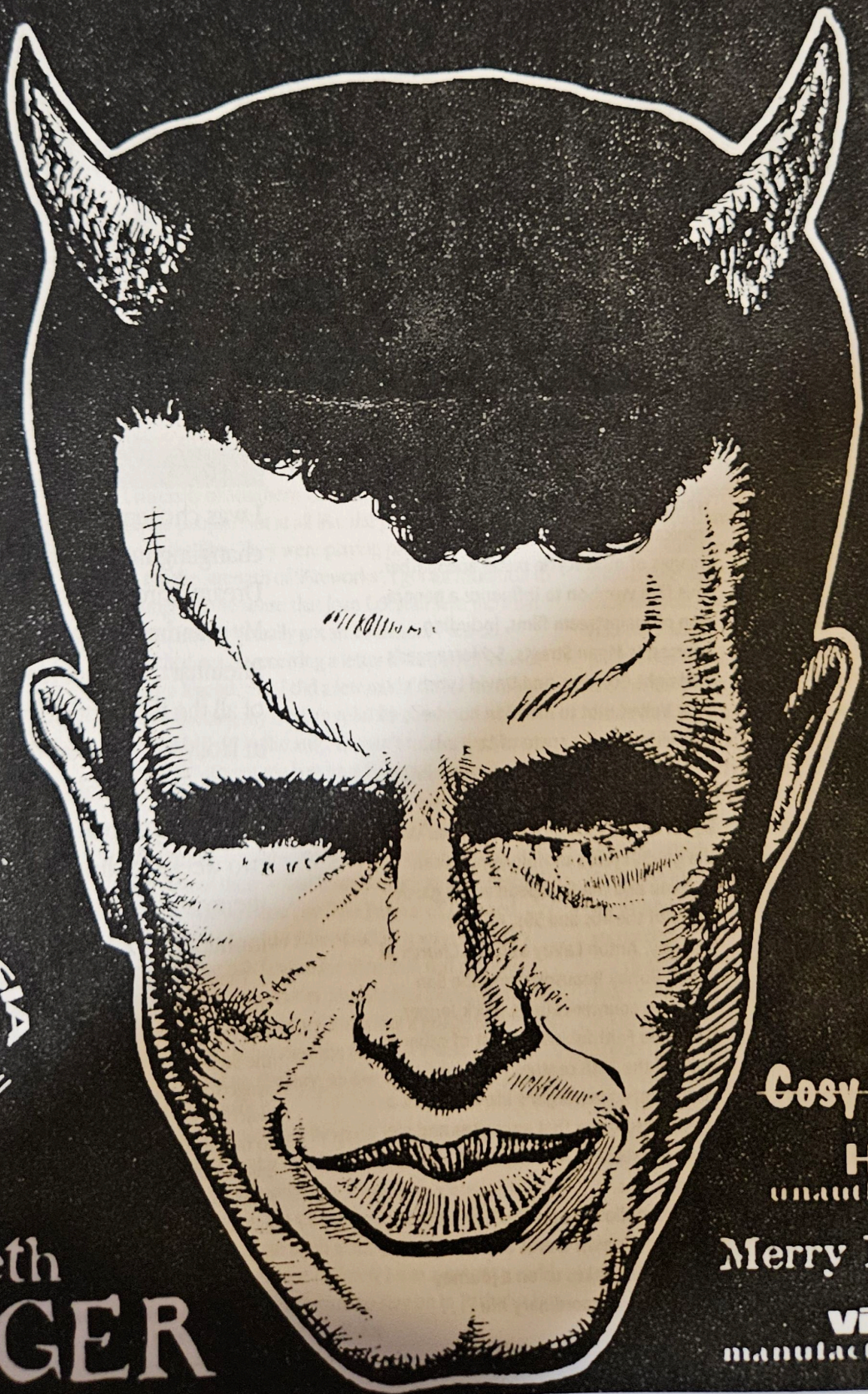


AMNESIA ISSUE

Kenneth ANGER

~~Cosy Fanni Tutti~~

Hackers
unauthorised access

Merry Pranksters

Videozines
manufacturing dissent

Kenneth Anger

Confessions of a Hollywood Delinquent

Born in Santa Monica, Kenneth Anger grew up in the shadow of Hollywood where his grandmother was a costume mistress. He attended dancing school with Shirley Temple and played the part of the princeling in Max Reinhardt's 1935 version of A Midsummer's Night's Dream, and began making his own 8mm films using neighbourhood children, long before he graduated from Hollywood High.

At seventeen he provoked his first major scandal with a highly accomplished film, Fireworks, a homosexual psychodrama that brought him to the attention of Jean Cocteau who sent him fan mail. Anger spent the next ten years in Europe where he finished another film, Eaux d'Artifice, while gathering material for Hollywood Babylon, a lurid exposé of the scandalous double lives of Hollywood stars which he first published in Paris around 1960, and almost instantly became an underground classic. Soon after this he returned to the States where he made his most infamous film, Scorpio Rising, a mock-heroic celebration of motorcycle gangs with a dazzling soundtrack of rock 'n' roll and Motown classics, ironically underpinning the luscious images of motorcycle metal and leather. This film went on to influence a generation of mainstream films, including Scorcese's Mean Streets, Schlessenger's Midnight Cowboy, and David Lynch's Blue Velvet, not to mention hundreds of pop videos and a spate of Levi ads.

What makes Anger even more interesting than the sum of his films and books is his legendary associations with the golden years of Hollywood, Jean Cocteau and the European avant garde scene of the 40s and 50s, Alistair Crowley, Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan, Bobby Beausoleil and the San Francisco counter-culture, Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithful, and a host of other icons of the 20th century. These reference points give Anger's life and work a mythic resonance that energises and elevates our reading of this period of history.

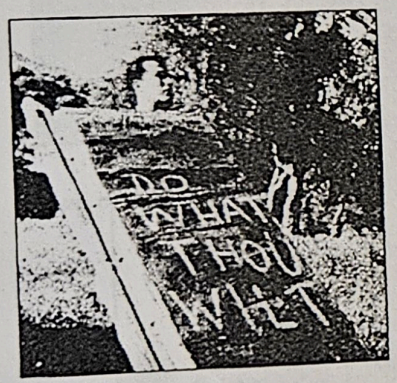
In the following article, Kenneth Anger, in his own words and for the first time in print, takes us on a journey through an extraordinary life . . . .

Childhood

I was chosen to play the part of the changling in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' through a touch of nepotism. My grandmother was a friend of Max Rheinhart. She met him in Vienna. So, of all the thousands of young hopefuls in Hollywood to play that non-speaking part, I got it, thanks to my Granny. I was having a great time. It took all of two weeks to shoot my scenes. I think the most exciting day was when the cellophane moonbeams caught fire.

There was a scene when the fairy nymphs went up to the Moon. The arc lights were too close. And whammy! The cellophane burst into flames and all the little girls dressed in cellophane got their butts synged. I applauded. I love the movies. I started by watching them as a very young child. Again, thanks to my grandmother who took me while I was practically a babe in arms to see Eisenstein's 'Thunder Over Mexico'. It made an indelible impression on me. Especially the scene where the peasants are trampled to death by horses.

A little later on, I decided to make movies of my own with the family home movie camera. My par-



Kenneth Anger holding the door of Thelma Abbey, with Crowley inscription.

ents let me use it as it was only used in the Summer. I began making little films like 'Ferdinand the Bull' which Disney later made as a cartoon from a little children's story by Munroe.

Mickey Rooney took me on a trip around the prop department of Paramount Studios and I spotted the violins. On one wall, 60 violins outlined in neon that had been used in 'The Goldiggers of 1933' a few years earlier. I pointed to one of the violins and said "I want one." and Mickey nudged the prop man and said "Give the kid a violin." That was the beginning of my collecting Hollywood memorablia. I took the violin and kept it very carefully. It's now an exhibit in MOMI in London in the music room. If you crane your neck very high, it's there. The neon still works.

I hope to be back soon (In London) hopefully with a new film. I'm working on a project on Mickey Mouse which I'm urgently trying to complete in the States and I'll be bringing it back one day.

Teen Angst

I made 'Fireworks' when I was seventeen, in three days, when my parents went back East to a funeral of an uncle of mine. He wasn't my favourite uncle. I refused to go to the funeral. They let me stay home and house-sit. So having the Beverley Hills house all to myself, I moved all the furniture out into the garden and turned it into a studio to shoot 'Fireworks' with a little help from my friends.

The sailors were real authentic sailors from the American navy who happened to be students in the cinema department. Trainee cameramen at the University of Southern California. They're actually very gentle people. Not at all like the people they appear to be in the film. They were playing parts.

On the strength of 'Fireworks', I got an invitation to Europe, in the sense that Jean Cocteau sent me a fan letter. I never actually got an invitation. I was so knocked out by receiving a letter from such a famous man, a legend, that I did a few mildly dishonest things – like hocking my family's solid silver tea-set, which was locked up in the attic. It wasn't missed for years (laughs) – to get my fare on a French liner to Europe in 1950.

My film 'Fireworks', which I'd sent for a lark to the Biarritz film festival – at that time there was only one film festival there – and it was known as 'The Festival of Abominable Films', or 'The Festival of Damned Films' or 'Festival du Film Maudit'. It was Cocteau's idea to have this festival for films that had run into trouble with the censors. My film had already run into trouble with the censors, including a police raid in Los Angeles. So I submitted the film and it won a prize. Cocteau was on the jury, so that might have had something to do with it.

In Paris, I could luckily speak French before I arrived. I studied it at Beverley Hills High School. I loved the French language. I was at a reception and film screening in the Cinemateque Francais and Henri Langlois offered me a job working at the Cinemateque, because he knew I was a runaway and I didn't really have any means to stay on in Paris. So for 12 years, I was kind of his go-for.

The Little Tramp

Through the help of Henri Langlois and Cocteau, I made a little film in Paris one Summer called 'Rabbit's Moon.' I was greatly influenced by a French film called 'Les Infants du Paradis' where Barrault (Jean-Louis) plays Pierot. I found some mime students and made a little film. A very short film about Pierot, the unhappy lover yearning for the Moon. At that time, the Moon – remember, this was before they landed on the Moon – was the symbol romantically for everything that was unattainable. Also, the Full Moon has a connection with love and lunacy.

Cocteau did a remarkable thing. He gave me permission to film his ballet 'Le Jeune Homme et la Mort' – 'The Young Moon and Death.' This is a beautiful performance ballet danced by Nathale Phillipart and Jean Babilee. I did film it on 16mm B/W without the set in Jean Babilee's garden. But we couldn't raise the money to do it in 35mm Technicolour. So it never got made as it was supposed to be.

This is the beginning of a series of disappointments I've had, but like the little tramp, I click my little heels and move on. I don't let things get me down.

Anyway, I did get something that worked out very well. That was a trip to Italy. Through a letter from Cocteau introducing me to the people from the Department of Antiquities, I got permission to film in the gardens of the Villa D'Este in Tivoli. One of my very favourite gardens. The most amazing thing though, is that I got permission to block off the walkways with string to keep people out. This was a thrill. I don't think you'd get away with that today. It's full of bus loads of American tourists.

I met Fellini and he had a midget friend called Marmilla Salvatorelli, who appeared as an extra in 'La Strada.' She agreed to appear in my film and we became great friends. She was only about this tall (indicates about four feet). The reason I chose a midget was to reproduce in film the idea that Piranesi used in his etchings, 'cos when I saw the Colloseum, it didn't look big enough. I realised in my mind, I'd been looking at the Piranesi etchings of the Roman ruins and he made everything seem larger by placing very small human figures, about half human scale, a child's size. And the horses on the carriage are about the size of dogs. Which gives the terrible, imposing, dreamlike feeling to his work. I tried to get that same feeling in my film by using a miniature person and I think I've succeeded.

I showed the film to Louise Brooks in Rochester, where she was living the last years of her life. She said it was very erotic and I was very pleased she saw that aspect of the film. The entire film consists of continuously ejecting and ejaculating water. And it's filmed in slow motion. So it's very....almost tactile. The whole thing was filmed in day time using infra-red film and filters to get the night effect. Then the final film was printed through a blue filter. The lighting for it took hours and hours because we had to wait until the Sun would peek through the Cyprus trees and create a magical spotlight just for five minutes or less. Then it would disappear to get the back light on the water. It was the most intricate and fascinating work I've ever

done out in nature. It was like turning nature into a kind of magic studio.

Death in the Garden

I had an English cameraman called Charles Lovett who helped me a great deal. He had fallen in love with this garden in Tivoli. After we finished, he went back to take some still photographs on his own. He was so wrapped up in getting the right image, that he stepped off a ledge in the gardens and was killed. He fell about 40 feet and was found dead under a broken rock. So it has both a mixture of good and bad memories for me. I wasn't there when the accident happened.

That's the first of several accidents that happened to me and people working in my films. I'm not trying to put people off from working on my crew (laughs) But sometimes it takes a little pluck. For instance, for Marianne Faithfull to go to Egypt when she was addicted to heroin. I didn't realise she had a little supply in our film bags. She could have caused a great deal of trouble for all of us. But somehow it wasn't noticed. The Egyptian mosquitos punished her by biting her severely (laughs). She was more allergic to their stings than to the needle at that time. She's off all those things now and living a very placid life in Ireland I hear. I love her dearly and I wish her all the best.

Mommy Dearest

In the mid fifties, I was called back to America unexpectedly. My mother died and she left me some money in the form of stocks and bonds in companies like Weston House. I got home and cashed them in which outraged my brother and sister who are rock solid Republicans (laughs). We never got along, even as kids. I once wanted to put a picture of F.D.R. (Roosevelt) in my bedroom and they said "Oh no, you can't do that, he's a Communist (laughs). So I put him under my bed, next to a picture of Mae West (laughs).

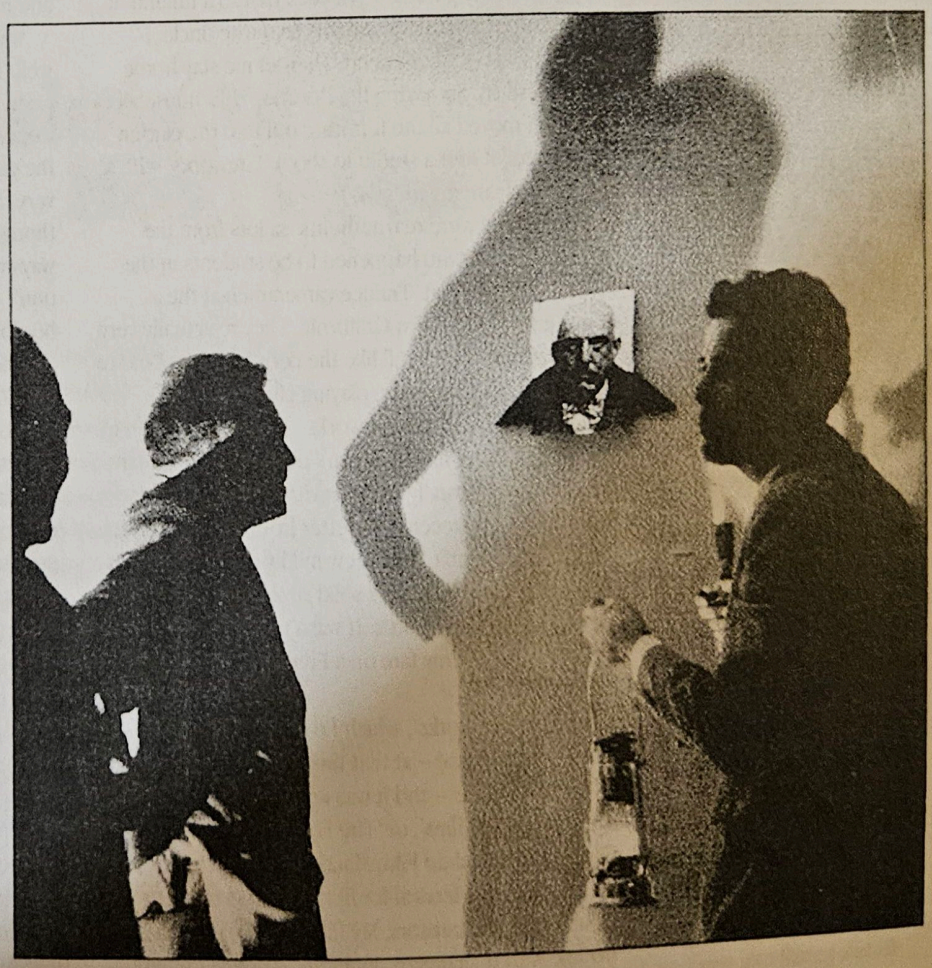
Anyway, with the money I got from Mother's stocks and bonds, I made 'The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome.' At the time, this was the largest budget I managed to get together. About $12,000.

'Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome' features a number of my friends including Anais Nin, the Cuban American writer playing Astarte. Everyone was asked what part they'd like to play. They all chose gods and godesses, which I think is a reflection on people's egos out there (laughs). Only one didn't and that was Curtis Harrington who was an experimental film maker when I met him. He later became a Hollywood director. He chose to play Cesare the Somnambulist, taken from Caligari ('The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'). The wonderful thing though, is when you have friends who'll work for you for nothing, it's very easy to bruise egos. If they walk out on you, you've had it. That could be the end of the friendship. There's no way you can say – you just got to come back and do another re-take. So it has it's advantages and it's drawbacks. Anyway, these were friends and I fed them well and also provided drink and a bit of 'smoke' and things like that. It was what you call a happy crew.

L.S.D.

I was first introduced to LSD by another friend of my grandmother's, Aldous Huxley (laughs). At that time, he was living just a short while away in the Hollywood hills. When later on I decided I wanted to reproduce this in the last sequence of 'The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome' – an hallucinogenic dream sequence. First thing I found out was, you can't focus a camera when you're on L.S.D (laughs). Of course, it later became illegal. In fact it isn't even made anymore – there's things they call LSD but it's really something else. It's bogus. My own experiments with it – you get these layers and layers of visions and they do superimpose. At least from my point of view. Someone else may see something totally different. So I tried to create that through superimpositions by layering film literally on an optical printer.

I think Magic Mushrooms and Lysergic Acid are gifts from nature. They're certainly dangerous and have led to some disasters. Maybe next century we'll come to a time when they'll be investigated again. I think they certainly merit it.....

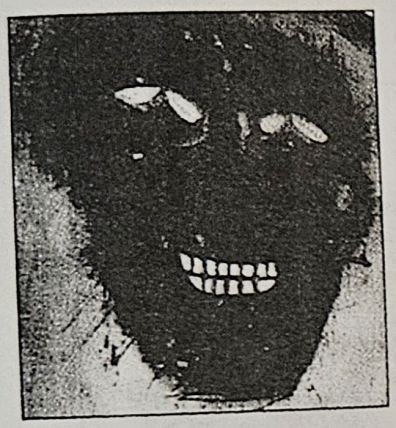


Dr. Kinsey and Kenneth Anger in Thelma Abbey, on the Isle of Celufu, off Sicily, 1955.

In Search of Crowley

'The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome' is the film in which I tried to show a little bit of the world of Aleister Crowley. Crowley died in 1947. He was a maverick mystic. I guess he belongs to everyone, but he was a citizen of the United Kingdom.

I'd been following his writing and collecting Crowley since I was a teenager. I think he needs a major rediscovery. Maybe we'll have to wait until the



Two of Crowley's paintings.

next century..... although it's happening little by little. His books are being re-printed. He's worth a read. I never met the man. I didn't arrive in Europe until 1950. Crowley died in 1947 in poverty in a boarding house in Hastings called Netherworld, which seems quite fitting (laughs). A belief in Crowley magic never brings you a lot of money (laughs).

There're other avenues to pursue..... like capitalism (laughs). I've put a little Crowley in most of my films. I did a film called 'Thelema Abbey.' I went to live in Thelema Abbey in Cefalu in Sicily. I was there for an entire Summer. Dr. Kinsey, the famous American scientist and pioneer in the field of sexuality came to see Crowley's erotic frescoes. A very randy bedroom it was too. After I'd taken off all the whitewash that Mussolini had covered them over with..... I guess he didn't like Englishmen who painted dirty pictures on bedroom walls (laughs).

There was a painting of the Scarlet Woman, Crowley's mistress..... it looked like some sort of goat. It was all very humorous as well. Crowley had a wonderful sense of humour. Then around the edge of where the bed was – of course there wasn't any bed when I was there. There were faces (painted on the wall) peeking over watching what was going on in the bed. It must have been quite interesting (laughs). They were called dog faced demons. They are actually a reflection of something that exists on the astral plane. You have to get used to them if they come to watch you in bed. You think it's ever so private, but sometimes it's not. They're sometimes called Incubi and Succubi..... Anyway the bedroom can get a little bit crowded (laughs).

Crowley lived on the Island of Celufu off Sicily in the 1920's for about five years before Mussolini kicked him off, mainly because of bad publicity Crowley had received in the press from one Lord Beaverbrook who called Crowley 'the wickedest man in the world.'

A British picture magazine called 'Picture Post', which is now, unhappily extinct, sent a cameraman down to do a picture story in three issues (which are now collector's items), on me staying at Crowley's villa in about 1955. I remember I was there when James Dean died. The night before, demons had run up and down on the tiles on the roof of the Abbey. I remember, the tiles were shaking all over the roof. There was no explanation for it. I couldn't figure out what was going on. And there were these elemental spirits coasting around the Abbey – I didn't invoke them and I didn't know how to get rid of them or banish them. So they're still there. Anyone who is going to rent the Abbey out, be prepared for some sleepless nights.

The 'Picture Post' had a television show at the time called 'Houlton Television.' And they allowed me to make my own documentary, which was called 'Thelema Abbey'..... of me, scraping off the whitewash and gradually revealing the erotic frescoes. Unfortunately, it's a lost film. Because when the 'Picture Post' went out of business, their files disappeared. Nobody knows what happened. It might surface some day here in London. I'm searching for it, but so far, no luck.

I then went back to America. I had another little windfall of money. Another relative died (laughs). By that time I had run out of relatives that liked me. With that, I was able to make 'Scorpio Rising.' As I remember it, 'Scorpio Rising' has two very interesting parallel stories. I never would have made it without the help of two other film makers – Marie Menken and Willard Maas. They lived in Brooklyn Heights in a penthouse apartment with two dogs, Blacky and Whitey who were the basis for Maggie and George in 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' Edward Albee was a friend of theirs. He wrote the play. I didn't, but I could have in fact. And made it much stronger (laughs).

Willard Maas was a professor of English Literature at an exclusive college in Staten Island. Marie Menken, his wife, (the Maggie character in the film, played by Liz Taylor) worked for 'Time' magazine. They'd get home from work on Friday, and drinking would start and it wouldn't end until Monday morning when they went back to work. Every weekend was a non-stop drinking bout. And I, as their house guest, was their witness and their referee. They played 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' for me every weekend for three months. It was quite extraordinary. I kept a diary. Edward Albee, of course, turned it into a very successful play. Although he removed some of the risque details from it. Willard Maas was actuallly a married, gay professor of literature, which put a whole new twist to the character of George. Maggie was very, very Catholic and much larger than George. So she was sort of a Lioness and he was a sort of rotund little Santa Claus figure. Maybe some day I'll make a movie about it (laughs).

They made their experimental 16mm films as a hobby and lent me their camera to shoot 'Scorpio Rising.' The film was shot in Brooklyn, out near Coney Island, using some Italian working class fellows who I somehow mesmerised into allowing me to film them without getting beaten up or killed (laughs). I still don't know how I pulled it off.

A couple of moments, it came very close to violence, but I managed to laugh it off. I lost one very precious artifact during the shooting. There's a scene in 'Scorpio Rising' where a fellow who's naked – he's naked except for a long black cape – climbs onto the back of a motorbike, a big Harley, and rides off into the night. Well, that cape was one of Bela Lugosi's Dracula capes. He had several of them and he did occasionally give one of them away. Bela, of course was buried in one of them. Anyway, my Dracula cape went off into the night on the back of a Harley Davidson and was never seen again (laughs).

That was my sacrifice for making the film. I didn't have any money to pay these fellows, so they said – that's alright, buy us ten cases of beer for our Halloween party. So I did, and they drank it. The next day they went on their last race of the year on the Day of the Dead. Of course they didn't even know this stuff was symbolic. I love finding innocent p[eople who are performing rituals and they don't even know what they are. This their last run was a dirt race, to a

place called Walden Pond, in New York, which is very rough terrain. And one of their members was killed that day in front of my camera. That's the last scene in 'Scorpio Rising.' I didn't plan it that way, but I've told you I've had these accidents here and there. It did make a rather good ending for the film. It's not faked. It is an actual accident in spite of the fact that he's wearing a safety helmet. He broke his neck.

When I finished shooting the film, I cut it in Hollywood. One day, I'd been up for three or four nights without sleep. A delivery man rang the bell and left me a film package. I didn't even glance at it. I thought it was one of my films which had been rented and returned to me. Then I opened it and saw it had been misdirected. It was a Sunday School film which was supposed to be delivered to the church down the street . Manna from heaven or a phoney miracle?

I stole the film. I kept it. I said , 'it's meant for me' and I cut the images of Christ on his last journey to Jerusalem into my film ('Scorpio Rising'). That's how it happened . If only things like that would happen more often. The company that made that film is still around. It's called Family Films (laughs). I've wondered if they would ever catch up with me. They make these incredible kind of stilted films telling stories from the Bible for children that must be bored to tears. It has that naive charm like folk art about it. And if I had made those scenes myself, I couldn't have done a better job on it, particularly the pasted on beards.

'Scorpio Rising' is personal, though I'm not a biker and I never was. I had to convince those bikers that I wasn't some kind of spy. Their bikes were so beautiful. They put all their money into them – they were obsessed with them. Their bikes came before their girlfriends. The bikes were their real mistresses. Later I found that the custom cars boys were just the same.

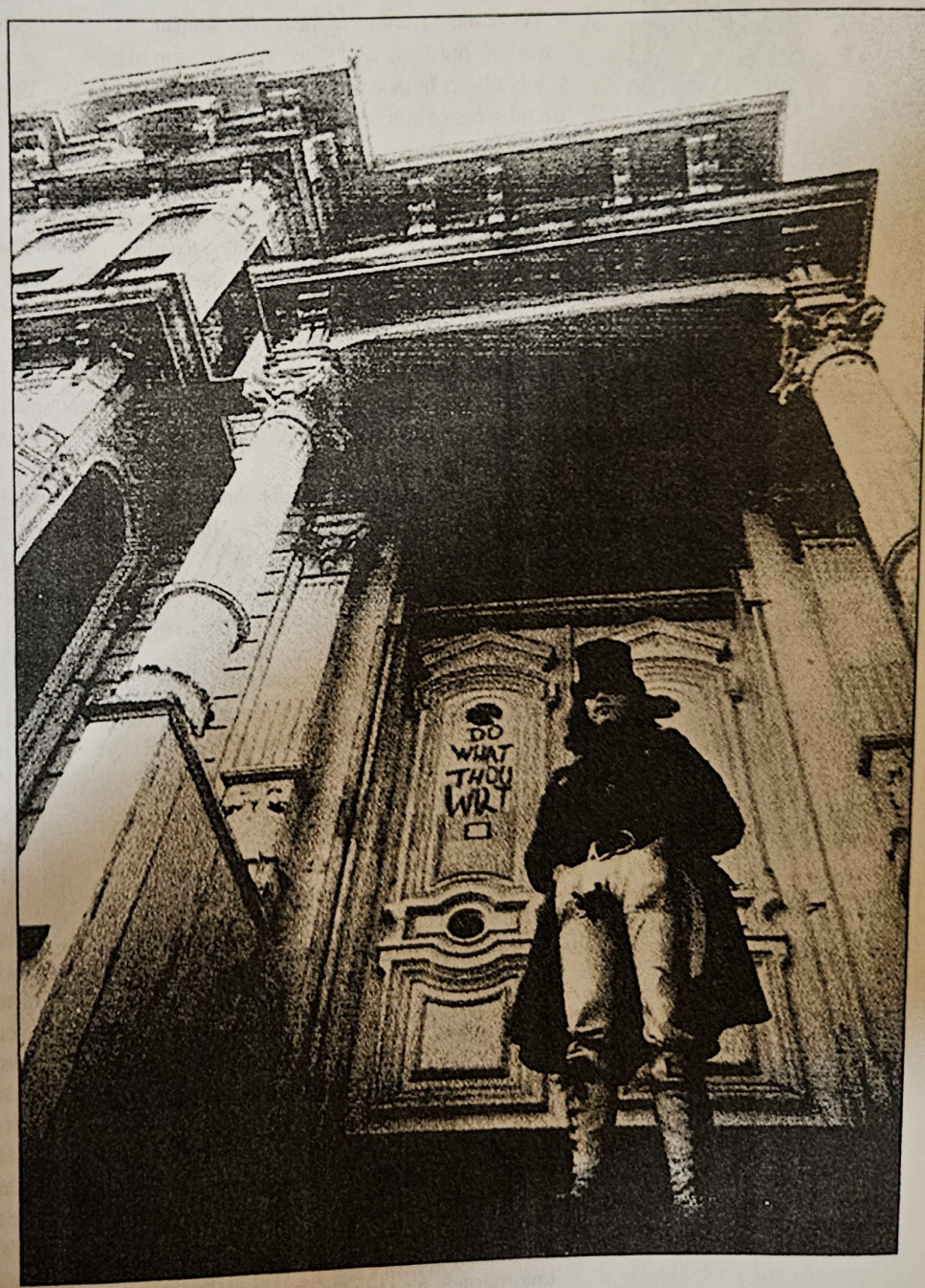
'Scorpio Rising' is autobiographical in the sense that I am a Scorpio Ascendant. That's Scorpio Rising. My Sun sign is Aquarius, the same sign as James Dean. There's a lot of Astrological references in the film. Oddly enough, or maybe it's not so odd for someone who is a practicing magician, but I believe in Astrology, even though I classify it as a pseudo-science.

I mean, how can rocks, floating about, millions of miles in space have any influence on our daily lives? Objectively, it sounds foolish. Nevertheless, why am I always attracted to Taureans and get into awful hot water with them. Like the widow of Jack Parsons, who's Crowley's (Aleister) natural son – a Taurus – she's the only woman I've ever had an affair with of the head and spirit... quite incredible. She's the red headed lady in 'Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome'.

Lucifer Rising

I made 'Lucifer Rising' during a period where I decided to come right out and say what I believed in. I thought time was running out on me. I'd outlived several of my friends and some of my enemies. Like Andy Warhol. I don't know if you've read any of his diaries, but I'm mentioned six times. I've never met Andy. I guess I've avoided him because we're on different wavelengths. He was under the delusion I thought he was the Devil. That's what he said six times in his diaries, which is a bunch of bullshit – I have much more respect for Lucifer. I'm the only film director who has this title (Lucifer) tattooed on his chest... Just to remind me.

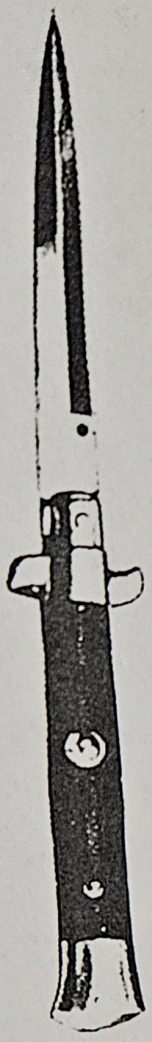
I began shooting 'Lucifer Rising' during the "flower power" days in San Francisco. Lucifer Rising – I was going to find a Gnostic messiah among the flower children... there he is... ain't he gorgeous... go follow him. Always being slightly ironic, 'cos I don't really follow anyone, not even Aleister Crowley. I've never joined the OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis, a magical organisation of Masonic heritage) nor the Church of Satan. Even though it's been put in print that I am a member... I was there when they founded it, but that's something else. In fact if you listen to the lyrics in 'Scorpio Rising', I say, don't follow leaders... Be your own leader.



Bobby Beausoleil in 'top hat', Haight Ashbury, San Francisco circa 1967.

Top Hat

Anyway, one of my stars, Bobby Beausoleil, my first Lucifer – he hadn't met Charles Manson at that time..... that came later..... but he was a Scorpio



which is another sign I get into trouble with. Taureans and Scorpions give me a bad time though I get along fine with Geminis. We began filming and suddenly – this is not the first time it happened – Bobby transformed himself into Eric Von Stronheim (laughs).....

He wanted to be the director and he had all these ideas. Some of them were pretty good but very expensive. How the movie would change and how I should have these wings made out of neon... and I said that would cost about $6,000 and he said – we'll find it, we'll rob a bank... and I said – that's going a bit too far.

I began filming with Bobby and had shot quite a lot when we had a quarrel. I had left him some money. He was doing some music for my film. He was a very talented musician. He was in a group called LOVE at the time. One of those pioneer psychedelic groups..... and I gave him $700 to buy some amps and stuff. So he took his van, (which I had bought him) down to L.A. from San Francisco and came back, supposedly with the amps..... and I said – Alright, where are they? And he said – Don't worry, you'll see them in time. In the meantime, he brought a large thing (indicates a large package) into my studio wrapped in black plastic – a bit sinister – and I said – Is that an amp? It looks like a bail of hay to me..... Then my pet dog at the time called Snow Fox – he's now deceased, bless his soul – started sniffing this package. So, I went over and slit it open.

There was a kilo of Mexican marijuana of very good quality for which he had paid $700. And I think he intended to roll it up into joints and sell them along the Haight-Ashbury..... and that's the rest of one movie and you can have those neon wings (laughs). So when he came home with one of his girlfriends one night – he had many, many girlfriends – remember, he was the original Don Juan of the Haight-Ashbury. They used to call him 'Tophat' 'cos he always wore an old battered top hat. And according to the girls, he was continually erect..... he was Top Hat (laughs).

Herr Anger

Occassionally, I can turn into King Kong. Basically I am mild mannered. The name Anger doesn't fit. I didn't make up the name. It's my German family name. It means in German, not the emotion anger but a meeting place where the Nazi Olympics were held and the big central stadium where Leni Rhefensthal filmed her masterpiece. It's called 'der Anger' and it's still there. It's designed by a brilliant architect called March. Basically, I am a Kraut with a bit of Scot thrown in. That's where Kenneth comes from. One rather bad relative who was English, ended up getting buried in one of your churches, maybe Westminster Abbey. I'm not really sure. His name was Lord Townesend and he was known as 'The Hanging Judge of Massachusetts'. He was particularly fond of ladies who had witching potentials. That's my mixed up background (laughs).

Anyway, I turned into King Kong, picked up Bobby by the scruff of the neck and literally hurled him out of my studio on Foulton Street in San Francisco. And threw the kilo of grass after him. So he was out of my life. Then he broke into my studio one night when I was out having dinner with friends, and he proceeded to steal all the rushes of the first 'Lucifer Rising' (and reputedly buried them in Death Valley) But he left a few scraps in the cutting basket and from these I made 'Invocation of my Demon Brother.'

I cut the film in England and showed them to Mick Jagger and he very kindly did an improvised score for it on his new toy which was a Moog synthesiser. And he didn't know how to play it very well at the time. The score would drive some people absolutely mad because it's just a kind of hypnotic, pulsing beat. But that's what we wanted.

Also, it's quite unique in that Mick gave it to me as a gift. It's probably the only time Mick Jagger has given a gift of music to anybody!

Rare film still from the original version of 'Lucifer Rising'. Bobby Beausoleil (far right) exchanges hand signals with Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan.

Film Threat #14 1988

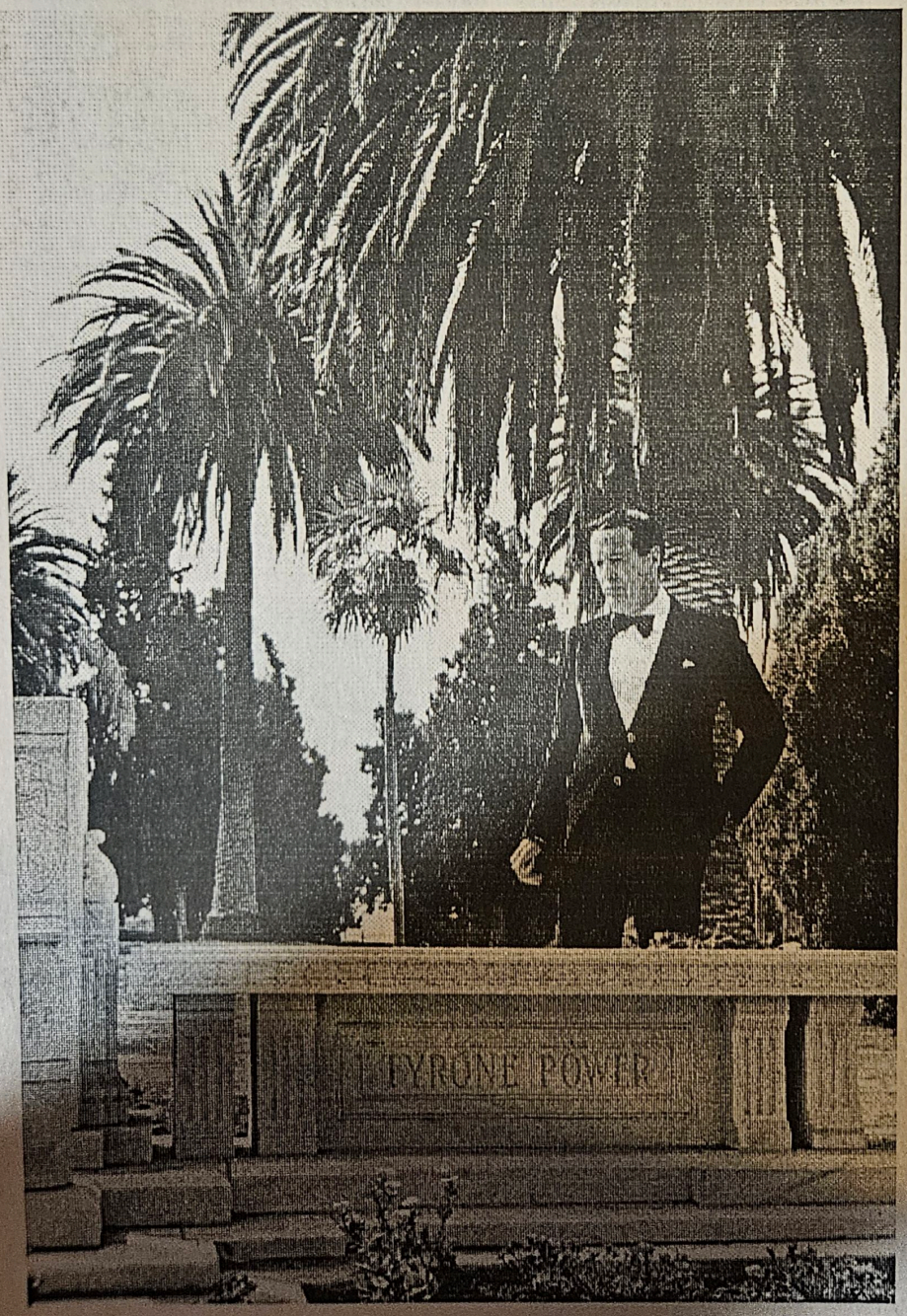
Cult Movies #8 1994

Hollywood's Black Sunshine:

"There is a pagan religiosity in (Anger's) films. His continuous reference to myth and to ritual creates a hypnotizing, a dream atmosphere that seems to put the viewer in a state of trance."

-Martin Scorsese, 1989

by Lee Harris



Los Angeles, 1932-Grandma, a wardrobe mistress at United Artists and other studios, leads her 2 1/2 year old grandson into a theater to see *Smilin' Through*. The boy is transfixed by Norma Shearer's appearance as a transparent ghost, and is hooked. Two years later, he is taking dancing lessons with Shirley Temple, and appears in a short film with her. At 5, he is acting in a film with James Cagney at Warner Brothers. At 8, he makes his first film, *Ferdinand the Bull*, with his parents' 16mm camera. At 16, he is present on a Columbia soundstage, watching Rita Hayworth film her "*Put the Blame on Mame*" number for *Gilda*. In the 60s, he is present as Keith Richards picks out *Ruby Tuesday* for the first time on the guitar, and is there when the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album cover is photographed. Along the way, he met and talked with D.W. Griffith, Erich Von Stroheim, and Orson Welles. He's seen his share of unglamorous Hollywood, spending a night cleaning up after Louise Brooks' sporadic vomiting, and listening as a bedridden Eleanor Powell complained that chemotherapy was making her pubic hair fall out.

Not that he's famous for any of these things-they are impressionistic images from the life of Kenneth Anger, film maker, and author of *Hollywood Babylon*.

Ken grew up in the golden ghetto of Beverly Hills, and precociously observed the movie idols with their feet of clay. He was in the home of Lupe Velez the morning after her suicide in 1942. One day on the way home from school, he spotted director Charles Brabin watering his lawn, and stopped to talk to him. Brabin was impressed that a mere kid knew that he had been replaced as director of the silent *Ben Hur* (1925). Watching in curiosity from an upstairs window was Brabin's wife-former early screen "vamp," Theda Bara.

Anger was raised mainly by his grandmother, who not only turned him on to the magic of the movies, but started one of the world's great movie memorabilia collections by giving him some buttons from a Rudolph Valentino costume. Through her acquaintance with director Max Reinhardt, she got Ken the role of the changeling prince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — which Anger still calls "the shining moment of my childhood." Grandma also fostered and encouraged his creative and rebellious nature. She was the precise opposite of Anger's parents,

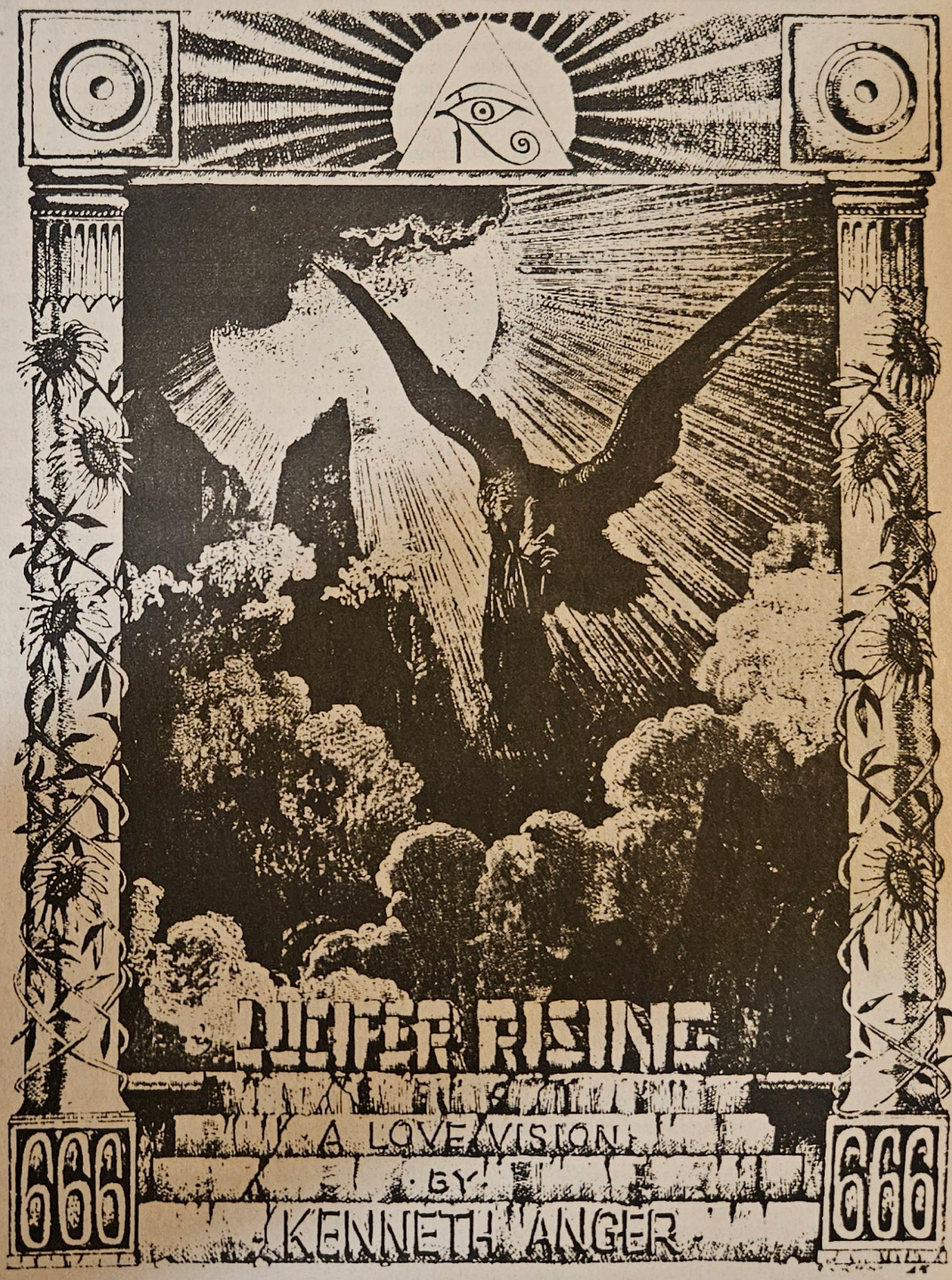
The Celluloid Cosmos of Kenneth Anger

Hollywood puritans who forbade movies on Sundays, and thought Ken was a communist because he had a picture of FDR in his bedroom!

"I once defined evil as motion pictures, and I'm not ready to take that back. I think evil is something which is attractive, and compelling, a seduction into the unreal which is glamorous and ultimately unsatisfactory. I think all those things can be said about movies. I still love movies." (Anger in a 1989 interview)

The first major Kenneth Anger film was made when he was just 17. *Fireworks* is a visionary, darkly masochistic work, filmed on stolen stock with stolen backdrops, in his parents' home when they were out of town. Tennessee Williams would eventually term it "the most exciting use of cinema I have seen," but far more important to Anger at the time was the fan letter that *Fireworks* inspired from Jean Cocteau. He wrote that the film came "from that beautiful night from which emerge all the true works. It touches the quick of the soul, and this is very rare." Armed with this mighty tribute, and sick of rejection by his family and Beverly Hills boredom, Ken expatriated himself to Paris immediately after high school. Inhabiting an artist's loft overlooking the Seine and the back of the Notre Dame Cathedral — "you can't get more romantic than that" he says-the heady artistic ferment of Cocteau, Piaf, Genet, and Colette welcomed him with open arms. Anger used Paris as a base for traveling throughout Europe, filmed *Rabbit's Moon* in Paris, and *Eaux D'Artifice* in Italy. The latter, a luscious visual feast of water spouting from demon faces carved in stone, reminds me of the title of a surrealist art object from the 20s: "*The Birth of Liquid Desires.*" As Anger himself describes it, "A night-time labyrinth of cascades, balustrades, grottoes and fountains."

Anger inherited some money in 1954, and used it to return to L.A. to film *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* in the home of Hollywood enigma Samson DeBrier. The cast included DeBrier, Anais Nin as Astarte the Goddess of the Moon, and future director Curtis Harrington as Cesare, the somnambulist from *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*! The film is based on one of the rituals of Anger's mentor Aleister Crowley, wherein members of a cult assume the roles of a god or goddess-Anger simply told his cast to come as their favorite deity.



Poster for Lucifer Rising by the late Rick Griffin.

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The word "cult," or occult, has always hung around Anger and his work. Even as an infant in his crib, he felt that a nearby image of Mickey Mouse — the pre-*Fantasia* Mickey, when he still had a tail — was out to get him! The substrata of Anger's work, and indeed his life, is built around his devotion to Crowley, once called "the wickedest man in the world." Crowley called his work magick, spelling it with a "K," which he defined as "The science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will." Anger has also had a lifelong preoccupation with Lucifer, seeing him not as evil, but illuminating. (The name derives from Lucum Fero, or Bringer of Light) "My own take on Lucifer is that he is the god of light and color...I don't see him as the devil at all." These liberating influences have helped Anger to create a powerful alternate universe in his films — when you watch them, you leave the familiar and the mundane behind.

The work most strongly associated with Anger's name isn't a film, but a book — two books really, with a third forthcoming — the first of which appeared in France in 1960. *Hollywood Babylon*, described by Pauline Kael as "a book as legendary as its subject," is the definitive work on tinseltown's scandals. Anger was sorting out the Hollywood B.S. from the truth before most *Cult Movies* readers were born, and the 1960 edition is much sought-after. Rewritten for the 1975 English edition with Jayne Mansfield on the cover, *Babylon* truly captures the lilting grace and nouveau-riche hedonism of early screenland, when it seemed the party would never end. Surprisingly, with all the scurrilous ground the book covers, only one lawsuit stemmed from the best-seller. It was brought by Gloria Swanson, denying that she'd written a letter to Louella Parsons saying that Lana Turner was "not an actress, only a tart." The case was thrown out of court when Anger produced the actual letter, complete with Gloria's signature.

After another European sojourn in the early 60s, Anger settled in New York in 1963. There he met a Long Island biker gang, obsessed with souping up their motorcycles, and they inspired what is perhaps Anger's most famous film — *Scorpio Rising*. They acted in the film as well, agreeing to do so after Anger bought them 20 cases of beer. Jim Hoberman, writing in *American Film* in 1981, called Scorpio "surely the most widely seen film in the history of the American avant-garde." With its beautifully photographed images of chrome, death, sex, James Dean, leather, and Brando, once you have seen *Scorpio Rising* you can never forget it. Largely because of including some footage of Jesus and his disciples from a Sunday school film misdelivered to him while editing the film, *Scorpio* was widely banned. For a while, in the states of New York and California, it was illegal for Anger to watch his own film!

Jonas Mekas, film critic for the *Village Voice*, once wrote a column reacting to *Scorpio Rising* being called an evil film. He wrote: "I happen to know that Kenneth is one of the beautiful, good people living on this earth...even if he would try to make an evil film, it would come out a life-enhancing film." Anger's detractors outnumber his supporters, though; a derogatory book on his life and films is being written now. He is mentioned in the final pages of *Helter Skelter*, the book about the Manson murders, as being "deeply involved in the motorcycle gang mystique and the occult." But that's nothing. A 1990 book about the influence of Satanism on American life, *Painted Black*, indirectly blames Anger for the Tate murders themselves!

The most enduring legacy of *Scorpio Rising* is a horrific entity known as the music video — a legacy which has earned Anger the title "Godfather of MTV." Besides borrowing *Scorpio*'s general concept of arresting visual images being combined with popular music, some videos have lifted the actual motorcycle imagery from the film. These include a video by Katrina and the Waves, and *Forever Your Girl* by Paula Abdul, but the most blatant rip-off was *Good Thing* by the Fine Young Cannibals. When I described it to Anger, he refused to watch it but said "I'd like some fine young money!"

During the Aquarian age of the 1960s, Anger enjoyed associations with some of rock and roll's famous figures. In the "Swinging London" of 1965, he became close to the Rolling Stones and partly inspired their song *Sympathy For the Devil*. Anger still has a bloody scarf he used to bandage Marianne Faithfull's wrists, when she attempted suicide while he and Mick Jagger were talking elsewhere in the same house.

In 1967, Anger was in San Francisco for the "Summer of Love," with the flower children a Dionysian embodiment of the artistic and personal freedom long familiar to him. At work on his most ambitious films to that time, *Lucifer Rising*, Anger organized an event celebrating the Equinox of the Gods at a theater on Haight Street. During the event or soon after, 1600 feet of *Lucifer* work-in-progress was stolen, along with Anger's van. He has no doubt that the thief was his housemate, Bobby Beausoleil, who had played Lucifer in the film. Beausoleil fled to L.A., became part of the Manson family, and is now serving a life sentence for the murder of musician Gary Hinman. One of Manson's girls later showed up at Anger's doorstep, trying to extort ten thousand dollars for the return of his film. He told her to fuck off, and the film is believed buried near the Barker Ranch in Death Valley, where the Manson gang was apprehended for the Tate-LaBianca slayings.

The theft of the film plunged Anger into a period of artistic despair, and he took out an "obituary" for himself as a film maker in the *Village Voice*. Eventually, he edited *Invocation of My Demon Brother* from out-takes scraped together from the stolen footage. *Lucifer*, after filming anew on three continents and several rough cuts (one of which had a score by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin), was finally completed in 1980. Ironically, the score for the final version of *Lucifer Rising* was recorded by Beausoleil in prison. It is the most recent entry in Anger's "Magick Lantern Cycle."

It's easier to see Anger's films now than ever before, with their availability from Mystic Fire Video in New York. "It isn't the same thing as seeing them on a screen," says Anger. "That's how I prefer them to be seen, but I accept it and I also gladly accept an additional way to increase my revenue...I'm not panicking, but I have to think about that. 'Nothing gets easier', as Bette Davis once said about growing old."

Anger lives in Palm Springs now, in the guest house of what was once Al Jolson's estate. He' working on his third *Hollywood Babylon* book, and loathes the TV series which bears his book's name. He has successfully sued to have his name removed as "advisor" from any future episodes of the Tony Curtis-hosted abomination.

When Forrest J Ackerman dedicated his final issue of *Famous Monsters* (#190) to Ken, he said that the name Anger is ironic, "because his nature is basically the opposite." Forry and I can both attest that if you know Kenneth Anger, you receive almost daily newspaper clippings and notes, and other evidence of his generosity. His films suggest a heavy, obsessive personality — and he can be — but that's tempered by a knowing, sardonic sense of humor and guffawing "harl harl" laugh.

On this rainy winter's night in old L.A., with someone somewhere in the world watching an Anger film for the first time, my search for a concluding remark leads to an oft-quoted line, again from Jonas Mekas: "One of the most complex personalities working in cinema...Kenneth Anger, the true cosmic explorer." ■

Lee Harris, Kenneth Anger and Inspector (former dog of Rudy Vallee), Hollywood Cemetary, 1990.

In Memoriam

KENNETH ANGER

FILM MAKER

(1947-1967)

The Village Voice, October 26, 1967

Kenneth Anger Filmography

Films you can see:

Kiddin' Hollywood (1934, Educational Pictures) Anger plays Yes Man #3 in this short with Shirley Temple.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1935, Warner Brothers) Anger as the Changeling Prince. With James Cagney, Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland, Anita Louise, Victory Jory, Mickey Rooney.

Fireworks (1947)

Puce Moment (1949)

Rabbit's Moon (1950)

Eaux D'Artifice (1953)

Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome (1954)

Scorpio Rising (1963)

Kustom Kar Kommandoes (1965)

Invocation Of My Demon Brother (1969)

Lucifer Rising (1970-80)

Six films by Anger, pre-*Fireworks*, unavailable for viewing:

Who Has Been Rocking My Dreamboat? (1941)

Tinsel Tree (1942)

Prisoner of Mars (1942)

The Nest (1942)

Escape Episode (1944)

Drastic Demise (1945)

Films lost or never completed:

The Love That Whirls (1949) seized by Kodak lab, saying they couldn't allow their film to be used for nudity.

Thelema Abbey (1955) Anger's only documentary, about the erotic frescoes in Crowley's occult retreat in Cefalu, Sicily.

Le Jeune Homme Et La Mort (1951) from Cocteau's ballet of the same name.

Maldoror-two segments filmed for a movie version of Lautreamont's surrealist novel of the 1800s.

L'Histoire D'O (Story of "O") (1961)-some financial backing came from the girl playing "O." The money turned out to be ransom from the kidnapping of the grandson of Peugeot, the auto magnate. Ken had no idea, and filming stopped instantly.